

July 7, 2004

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Mr. Robert Treanor
Executive Secretary
California Fish and Game Commission

Dear Mr. Treanor

Please add to the agenda for Title 14 CCR Pacific Herring regulations now under consideration by the Commission, the following proposal for the San Francisco Bay Gillnet Herring Fishery.

Herring Gill nets for the 2004/2005 and 2006/2007 may have a minimum mesh size of 2 inches and a maximum size of 2 ½ inches measured as follows. 10 meshes are to be suspended vertically in a straight line down from a peg not larger than 1/16 of an inch and measured by a standard tape measure. The 10 meshes must measure from the inside of the first knot to the outside of the last knot and shall not be less than 20 inches hanging with a 1 pound weight hanging on the 11th mesh. Nets will be measured wet while fishing.

Measurements shall be taken vertically from the middle of the web hanging vertically between the cork line to the lead line.

Reasons for the mesh size change are as follows.

1-At the present time we are using 2 1/8 inch mesh and the mesh is too large to catch our quota in San Francisco Bay, along with environmental damage to our fishery.

2-The fish are caught by the bellies instead of by the gills. Because of this, a large percentage of fish are falling off nets as the nets are coming out of the water. Scales are missing from the herring and we feel that we are needlessly killing a lot of fish from the drop offs. This has got to stop and the only way that it can is to harvest the fish with the proper size nets.

3-We are also almost always coming up with herring eggs deposited on our nets. The reason for this is that the fish are depositing their eggs as they squeeze through the mesh or because our nets are in the water much too long trying to catch fish with too large a mesh and the herring are spawning on the nets.

A few years back, we had the very same problem and the biologists were quick to lower the mesh size from 2 1/4 to 2 1/8 With the stretching of the mesh, we were able to fish with 2 1/16 inch nets. Our problems went away. We became a model fishery in the state and it was determined that Gill Netting was the best environmentally safe way to harvest Herring in San Francisco Bay. This was the main reason that the Round Haul fishery was phased out.

The Biologist decided a few years later to up the mesh size by 1/6 of an inch and our prior problems came back.

The mesh size was changed by measuring nets a different way.

It should be known that approximately 5 years ago that this proposal we are asking for was adopted in Tamales Bay. The fishery had major problems, even worst than ours. The Biologist and fishermen got together and came up with the 2-inch mesh size. That fishery has improved every year since they went from 2 1/8 inch to 2-inch mesh. The run is building every year and the age class being caught hasn't changed at all. In fact, they are even starting to get older fish.

What we will accomplish by adopting this changing of mesh size.

- 1-We will eliminate the drop-offs from our nets.
- 2-We will eliminate most, if not all the mass of eggs coming up on our nets.
- 3-We will catch our quota in days or hours rather than weeks or months.
- 4-After our quota is caught, fish can come into the bay and schools can spawn without being disturbed.
- 5-Our cost of operating will go down. Our profits up, creating more jobs for crewmen.
- 6-The state will save money by managing the fishery in a much shorter time.
- 7-Enforcement can spend less time on the water measuring nets.
- 8-Coast Guard can spend less time monitoring herring boats.
- 9-Ferries will be happy to have us out of their way sooner.

Anyway that you look at it, it is a win, win, situation for everyone including the fish.

If this proposal produces unforeseen impact, the commission can readily address this regulation for the following season.

This proposal is submitted by the following San Francisco Herring Permittees.

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